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## **Chairman Towns Wants More Information on the Forced Resignation of Shirley Sherrod**

***Emerging details raise questions about circumstances surrounding Sherrod's resignation***

WASHINGTON – Chairman Edolphus “Ed” Towns (D-NY) is calling for Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack to provide the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform with more details on the forced resignation of Shirley Sherrod as the Georgia state director of rural development for the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Department officials asked for Sherrod’s resignation on Monday after a misleading video surfaced of her delivering a speech before the NAACP in which her remarks seemed to conflict with the Department’s “zero tolerance” policy for discrimination.

Secretary Vilsack phoned Chairman Towns yesterday to discuss the Department’s decision to request Ms. Sherrod’s resignation. Since their discussion, Chairman Towns believes “details have emerged” which “seem to indicate that Ms. Sherrod’s comments, when placed in context, were fully consistent with the Department’s ‘zero tolerance’ policy.” In the letter to Secretary Vilsack, Chairman Towns questioned the context of the forced resignation and whether or not appropriate procedures were followed to ensure “fact-based decision making” in employment matters.

“Ms. Sherrod was vilified in the press and her professional reputation called into question, and that is deeply troubling,” said Chairman Towns.

In the letter to Secretary Vilsack, Chairman Towns stressed the importance of the agency employing a personnel process “that ensures fact-based decision making” and wants a briefing scheduled “as soon as possible” to fully understand the circumstances surrounding Ms. Sherrod’s departure.

Chairman Towns concluded, “It is important that the Federal government lead the way in terms of its treatment of employees,” said Chairman Towns. “To condemn Ms. Sherrod without full

knowledge of her remarks is unjust, especially when it appears the message she was trying to convey was one of reconciliation. To prevent this kind of incident from happening again, we must ensure that the Department's actions with regard to employees are based on the facts."

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### Documents and Links

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[Letter from Chairman Edolphus Towns to Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack](#)